

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Wellstone Apparel, LLC

Mississippi Technology Alliance

Wellstone Apparel, LLC Boosts Productivity with Lean

Client Profile:

Wellstone Apparel is a garment manufacturer with traditional cut and sew processes. Wellstone manufactures uniforms for the military and government agencies such as the US Postal Service. The company is located in Columbia, Mississippi and employs 210 people.

Situation:

Wellstone's objective was to develop a strong and consistent program of 'continuous improvement' activities at the plant as indicated by their corporate management who supported Lean. The goal was to organize the plant floor to eliminate unwanted items, improve safety and flow through departments, organize re-works going to and from the production floor, identify all needed items, and designate a place for each that is visible. The finish and boxing area was congested, with safety issues, too many processes, inconsistent flow, too much work in process, and underutilized personnel. Wellstone was also faced with a reduction in customer orders for one of their primary product lines, Army Combat Uniforms. Production systems needed to be restructured to the smaller customer order quantities, without a loss of productivity or profitability. The company contacted the Mississippi Technology Alliance (MEP.ms), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

MEP.ms at Mississippi State University's Industrial Outreach Service trained Wellstone employees to conduct a Kaizen event using a comprehensive set of Lean tools and strategies to implement improvements on the plant floor. MEP.ms trained employees in 5S (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain) philosophies and practices. After conducting the Kaizen event and adhering to the Lean principles taught in the training, the Army Combat Uniform line was restructured from a capacity of 7,000 units per week to 3,000 units per week. Wellstone identified the necessary machines and began positioning the equipment starting with the last operation. With pull systems theory in mind, they arranged the equipment from the end back to the beginning of the process. Wellstone was able to combine 31 jobs within the Army Combat Uniform Coat line into 13 jobs, running at a level of 600 units per day. In the restructuring process, employees eliminated the waste of 300 bundle handling events per day, thus enhancing flow and reducing the need for storage capacity in the line. As a result of MEP.ms' assistance, the company reduced waste and improved material flow in the facility.

Results:

- * Increased productivity by 3 percent.
- * Increased sales by \$21,000.

Testimonial:

www.mep.nist.gov



NIST is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

"Wellstone Apparel benefited from the services provided by MEP.ms Center at Mississippi State University's Industrial Outreach Service with reduced waste and improved material flow in the facility. These improvements improved the outlook for the plant with increased productivity within the facility."
Jerry Hoff, Chief Engineer